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ABSTRACT

Most of the activities presented in this packet are appropriate for students in grade 4 through high school. To make the activity more challenging and to meet the needs of older students, the teacher may wish to add detail and written work to complement the assignment's creative aspects. These activities are adapted easily to content areas, and in reluctant readers, these creative responses seem to spark an interest in books. The activities also provide opportunities for whole group, small group, paired, and individual work. It is suggested that either the teacher model the project for the class or the class collaboratively create a model--laying a firm foundation for the activity and providing sufficient background helps the students become interested in the assignment. A name is made up for each activity to create a point of reference for the students as the class revisits the activities throughout the school year. The rubrics for each activity are created collaboratively--each class may create a different rubric. The teacher provides the umbrella structure and the students submit their ideas for the details in the rubric. Activities such as these help students to work, to read, and to share books within a framework, but also allow students to have opportunities for choice, voice, control, and time to read and to enjoy books. The eight activities outlined here have the following names: Character Hand Prints, Vocabulary Squares, Positive/Negative Graphs, Book Talks, Jigsaw Conversations, Literary Letters, Book Advertisements, and Informal Table Talks. (NKA)

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**TIME OUT FOR READING:
"A Potpourri of Creative Response Activities for
Middle and Secondary Students"**

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Creative Responses

- ✓ Character Hand Prints
- ✓ Vocabulary Squares
- ✓ Positive/Negative Graphs
- ✓ Book Talks
- ✓ Jigsaw Conversations
- ✓ Literary Letters
- ✓ Book Advertisements
- ✓ Informal Table Talks

Overview

Most of these activities are appropriate from 4th grade through high school. In order to make the activity more challenging and to meet the needs of older students, you may wish to add detail and written work to complement the creative aspects of the assignment. These activities are adapted easily to content areas. For reluctant readers, these creative responses seem to spark their interest in books.

Another important goal through these activities is to provide opportunities for whole group, small group, paired, and individual work. I model the project for the class or we collaboratively create a model. Laying a firm foundation for the activity and providing sufficient background helps the students become interested in the assignment. I make up a name for each activity to create a point of reference for the students as we revisit the activities throughout the school year.

The rubrics for each activity are created collaboratively. Each class may create a different rubric. I provide the umbrella structure and they submit their ideas for the details in the rubric.

Activities such as these help students to work, to read, and to share books within a framework but also allows students to have opportunities for choice, voice, control, and time to read and to enjoy books.

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Character Hand Prints

1. Work as a whole group on the concepts of character traits, personality traits, biographical information, and background information as it relates to people or characters in the book or a story.
2. Create a comprehensive wall chart of character traits. Emphasize that many character traits are complementary, while others would be in opposition to one another.
3. Define assignment. You may choose to model the character handprints for a book you recently read or collaboratively create the handprints for a well-known character (e.g. a fairy tale character).
4. Suggested assignment requirements:
 - Trace both hands on a large sheet of construction paper.
 - Each hand will represent the same character from a book recently read.
 - One hand will be biographical information-one piece of information per finger.
 - The other hand will be character traits that best exemplify the character-one trait per finger.
 - Each finger will have a symbolic design to represent written information.
 - The name of the character goes on the palm with the title and author of the book.
 - Embellish and decorate as desired.
5. Extensions:
 - Biographies
 - Historical figures
 - Oral presentation to accompany hand print
 - Character description and rationale for choice of character traits
 - "Get to Know Your Students" activity at the beginning of the year
 - Science study of plants, animals, etc. (e.g. animal traits, animal parts, animal behaviors)

Vocabulary Squares

1. Students use index card for a bookmark. Students record new words on the card accumulating about 10 words. Recommend that they record the page number, as well.
2. Select 4 words from their list. Make 4 vocabulary squares on large construction paper. Each square has the word and 4 things related to the word:
 - Definition
 - Synonym/Part of Speech/Variations
 - Symbolic design depicting word meaning
 - Sentence using word
3. Decorate and include title and author of the book.
4. Extensions:
 - Content area vocabulary
 - Geographical features
 - SAT vocabulary
 - Word families
 - Foreign language

Positive/Negative Graphs

1. Adapted from *Seeking Diversity: Language Arts with Adolescents* (Heinemann, 1992) by Linda Reif
 - Initiate this activity for the opening of school
 - Chart story events
 - Teach point of view and perspective
2. Visual representation of events in a book
3. Brainstorm list of positive/negative events in the book
4. Arrange events in a line graph, bar graph, or pie chart
5. Adaptations:
 - Graph events in a historical time period
 - Graph events in a war from each side's perspective
 - Graph events in a person's life from a biography or autobiography
 - Graph own life

Book Talks

1. Formal approach to sharing books
2. Practice in public speaking skills
3. Practice in planning for a public presentation
4. Class creation of rubric with guidance from teacher (see sample rubric in Appendix)

Jigsaw Conversations

1. Provides an informal conversational activity to share books
2. Exposes students to a greater variety of books
3. Provides practice of interviewing techniques, note taking, formulating questions, practicing good listening skills and conversational skills
4. Utilizes a variety of student groupings
5. Follows a sequence of activities:
 - Brainstorm as a whole class good questions one could use to ask another person about their book. Questions cannot have yes/no answers.
 - Introduce or reinforce the concept of interviewing and note taking during an interview.
 - Create individually a quick list of 10 interview questions a student could ask another about a book.
 - Pair students for interview. Students interview each other about book read and jot notes.
 - Switch student partners so each student has a new partner. The interviewer tells the new partner about the book that his/her previous partner read. Students participate as an interviewer, interviewee, and introducer of a new book that he/she has not read.

Literary Letters

1. This is an abbreviated version of writing dialogue letters to students.
2. Write one generic letter to the class asking each student to respond to it in their notebook.
3. Letter needs to contain direct questions to stimulate student writing, to provide focus, and to frame their responses.
4. Format provides for more thoughtful answers rather than a listing of what happened first, second and third, etc. about the book that they read.

Book Advertisements

1. Start by studying professional book advertisements in small table groups.
2. List all the different elements that are included in professional book advertisements
3. List all the descriptive words that are used in the advertisements. Brainstorm more descriptive words to use.
4. Group descriptive words by synonym clusters to show that it would be inappropriate to use words opposite in meaning.
5. Decide collaboratively the elements that are required in the advertisements and the elements that are optional in the advertisements.
6. Equip students to create a more professional type of advertisement and to provide instruction in vocabulary, e.g. adjectives.

Table Talk

1. Provides a quick way to share books without a lot of preparation.
2. Pass a "hat" with folded strips of paper each containing a response question. Each student chooses a question.
3. Take about 10 minutes to discuss books. Each student begins by answering the question drawn about his/her book. Students pass questions around the table so each student talks about his/her book with regard to each question.
4. Circulate and listen to the conversations.
5. Sparks interest in books and exploration of new books and authors.

Appendix

- Book Talk Rubric
- Discussion Questions
- Book Advertisement Guidelines
- Literary Letter
- Response Choice Grid

Book Talk Rubric

Due Dates:

Total Value: 65 points

Oral Portion: 30 points

Delivery: 15 points

Clear voice/projection: 5

Speaking smoothly: 5

Eye Contact: 5

Content: 15 points

Summary/Characters 10

Title/Author/Genre/

Fiction/Non-Fiction 2

Opinion/Why 3

Artifact: 10 points

Having an artifact 5

Explaining significance 5

Written Portion: 20 points

General summary 15

(1 paragraph about plot and 1 paragraph on characters-minimum)

Artifact 2

Title/Author/Genre

Fiction/Non-fiction 3

Time Frame: 2-5 minutes 5

TOTAL: 65 points

Name: _____

Title of Book: _____

Comments:

Discussion Questions

What was the main idea...or what was the story about?

Was there a problem that needed to be solved? Who solved the problem? How was it solved?
Could you think of another way to solve the problem?

What was the climax or highest point of the story?

Is the story predictable or unpredictable? Explain.

Who are the main characters? Describe them.

Who is your favorite character? Why?

Were the characters realistic? What made them realistic or unrealistic?

What was the general feeling of the book (sad, funny, mysterious, informative...)?

Did you experience particular feelings for a character? What were they and why did you feel that way?

What is your opinion of the book? Why?

To whom would you recommend this book? Why?

Describe the setting of the story? Would you change the setting in any way? How?

If you were a character in the book, how would you act? What, if anything, would you change? Why?

From which character(s) did you learn?

Is there any way in which you have changed by reading this book?

Compare this book to another book that you have recently read?

What is your opinion of the author's style of writing?

Compare the main character in this book with a favorite character from another book. How are they similar? How are they different?

Can you relate an event from your life to an event in the book?

Talk about the results of a particular character's actions? How did the character's actions affect others in the book?

Who were the good characters in the book? Why were they good?

Who were the evil (bad) characters in the book? Why were they bad?

How would you rate this book on a 1-10 scale with 10 the best score? Why?

Would you make any changes in the story? If so, what would they be?

What was the funniest or saddest event in the story? What made it funny or sad?

Would you suggest that a school librarian buy this book? Why or why not?

Is there a lesson to learn from the story that you could apply to your life? What is the lesson?

What kind of person do you think the author is? Why?

Which character, if any, is most like you or the most different from you? Why?

What was the theme of the story? How could you apply this to your life?

FOR NON-FICTION:

What especially surprised, interested, or impressed you about the topic of the book? Why?

In what ways could you relate information you learned from the book to every day life or to modern society?

Predict how the information presented in the book will affect society in the 21st century.

What is the source of information in the book? Is it reliable? How do you know?

Based on the information in the book, can you draw any conclusions about the importance of these facts?

How is the writing style similar or different from a fiction book?

Why did you choose this book?

Are there illustrations? How do they add to the quality of the book? If there are not illustrations, do you think illustrations would enhance the book?

Book Advertisement Guidelines

Title/Author*

Publisher*

Illustration of scene, character, an event, or cover of the book*

Praises or recommendations from critics or other notable authors*

Awards won by the author

Bestseller status of author

Other book titles by this author

Where to purchase the book/prices

Short plot summary*

Genre

Short description of main character

Descriptive words (adjectives)*

Assignment:

- Create a book advertisement
- Include all items marked with an asterisk *
- Choose at least 4 additional items to include in your advertisement
- Choose descriptive words from class chart

Sample Literary Letter

Dear Students,

I have read several good books since I last wrote to you. Let me catch you up on some titles that I recommend.

At the close of my last letter, I mentioned that I wanted to read Go Ask Alice. I read the book and enjoyed it quite a lot. However, I thought that what happened to Alice was very sad. She got caught up in the drug scene of the '70s, which led to her downfall. I am sure there are lots of stories like hers about young people getting involved with drugs. What kids don't realize is that drugs can kill! But there was one thing that bothered me about the story. I felt that Alice's parents were out of touch with her. They never quite seemed to realize how serious the problem was nor did they take strong action to help her. Don't you think that your parents would recognize such strong behavioral changes if it were you?

Another book that I have recently read was Z is for Zachariah by Robert C. O'Brien. This author also wrote Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of Nimh. Many of you probably read this book in elementary school. Z is for Zachariah is very different from this book. I think that the mark of a good author is when their books are not all the same. It shows that they have a strong talent as a writer. Z is for Zachariah is about a young girl who thinks that she is the sole survivor of a nuclear holocaust. Unexpectedly, another person come into her camp and scares her. She becomes more alarmed when she learns that this person killed another survivor. This is an interesting survival story but different from the type of survival stories that Gary Paulsen writes. I always wonder if I would have enough strength to survive under such difficult circumstances. Do you think you could survive? What would you do to help yourself?

I tried a new author – Norma Fox Mazer. I read two of her books, Out of Control and The Taking of Teri Mueller. She has written lots of books and is a popular author among young people, especially girls. I enjoyed both books and will add this author's name to my list of favorites! Why don't you try out a new author? Out of Control is story about 3 boys who engage in negative behavior without thinking of the consequences. Have you ever done something without thinking or realizing what it could lead to? If so, you might find this book interesting and relevant to your life.

Oops! I almost forgot to mention The Boggart by Susan Cooper. This book is fantasy, which I don't normally choose to read. I really enjoyed this story about a ghost. I found the book to be highly entertaining and well written. It contained humor and suspense mixed with some modern technology. The author's style of writing was very descriptive and absorbing. The author gave the ghost a strong personality and feelings. While I was reading the book, I felt sorry for the ghost. Have you ever read a book in which you developed strong feelings for a character? Tell me about it in your next letter.

I don't have enough room to write to you about all the new books that I've read recently. I wrote about the ones that impressed me the most. I want you to write me back and tell me about the books that you have been reading lately.

I would like to read another book by Susan Cooper. Do you have any books that you would recommend to me? What are you going to read next? I'll be looking forward to reading your letters.

Always reading,
Mrs. Darwin

Response Choice Grid

Summary*	Free Choice Artistic	Letter to an Author*
Written Response* What do you think happened before the story began?	Dialogue Letter*	Free Choice Written*
Character Sketch and Written Description*	Book Talk	Character Handprint
Book Advertisement	Use Language Arts Template from Inspiration for a Character or Events in Book	Artistic Scene from the Book
Bio-Poem of a Character	Character Journal*	+/- Graph of a Character's Life
Vocabulary Squares	Change the lead or ending of the story*	Read aloud a picture book to the class and complete a written response*

Do any 4 activities that have an asterisk *. Each activity must be a minimum of one page of writing.

Do any other 4 activities.

A total of 8 activities must be completed during the quarter.

Interim due date: 2 written activities with an * and 2 activities of your choice.

Final due date:

Use the individual work time to complete the activities.

Do not use the same book or the same character for all the activities. Use at least two different books and two different characters.



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